

City of Norwich
Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Norwich City Court

April 15, 2013
7:00 PM

Present: D. DeForest, K. Campbell, H. Graves, M. Stewart, J. Miller

Absent: R. Mirabito, S. Prentice, E. Bunce

Staff: T. Dreyer, A. Donnison

I. Call to Order:

Vice-Chair D. DeForest called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. On a motion by Sheldon Prentice, the minutes of the January 21, 2013 meeting were approved by a vote of 4-0-1.

II. Comprehensive Plan Update:

Todd Dreyer stated that tonight's section for review, Real Estate Tax Base Analysis, was an unusual section to see in a Comprehensive Plan. It was noted that over one-third of the properties in the City were either wholly exempt or partially exempt and that this was not unusual for a county seat. J. Miller inquired about the properties that were getting a partial exemption such as those who have been on programs through the EDZ – is this program still running and if so how many and how long before they are paying full taxes. T. Dreyer stated that the EDZ is no longer in operation but that there are likely some businesses that are likely near the end stages of the program for tax reductions. T. Dreyer noted that there is another state program that started in 2010 that allows municipalities to provide tax benefits for newly constructed multi-family dwellings as well as significant rehab of buildings for multi-family dwelling use. It was noted that other exemptions included veterans and senior ones that are always variable. The STAR exemption is a school program and does not affect city taxes. T. Dreyer stated that part of the reason a county seat often has a higher percentage of exempt properties is that all government offices such as all county properties are exempt. All churches are also exempt and we have a large segment of other exempt properties such as CWS, group homes and others. T. Dreyer stated he would check with the assessor to see if he had information regarding the aging off of properties that have tax exemptions through programs such as the EDZ.

J. Miller asked for clarification about the section being reviewed tonight. T. Dreyer stated it is in the Profile section of the plan and that there is only 1 more segment left in that section to review which is Natural Resources and also noted that this is a small segment and the natural resources of the city are unlikely to change much.

M. Stewart asked if the Planning Board could go over the segment regarding census data because at the time it was reviewed there was a lot of missing data we were waiting on from the Census

Bureau. T. Dreyer stated he would send this section with all the current data out to all members for review.

J. Miller noted that there seems to be differences in assessments on many properties that do not reflect the actual resale value of the home. T. Dreyer stated that the assessor uses building permits that are pulled in the codes office as well as resale information of homes to adjust assessed values on a parcel by parcel basis. A. Donnison agreed and stated that there has not been a property reval in over 25 years, resale values have changed over the years but to speak with the assessor to get a complete understanding as to how the equalization rate works. J. Miller asked why it has been so long. A. Donnison stated that he should ask Mayor Maiurano and/or the Common Council for that answer.

T. Dreyer stated that the updated information in the tax table came from the assessors office. It was noted that there was a slight increase in the number of single family homes as well as a decrease in the number of two family, multi-family and mobile homes. It was also noted that there was an increase in the total number of acres within the city limits. T. Dreyer stated that he asked Brian Fitts (assessor) and Bill Roberts (finance director) how this change could happen. T. Dreyer was told that there was a change in the method used to calculate acres within a municipality. It had previously been a cumbersome process to calculate it and now it is all done through GIS.

K. Campbell asked if a better source for data regarding the number of single, family and multi-family dwellings would be the code department since there is now a rental registration requirement. A. Donnison stated that the codes department info may indeed be more accurate because we have seen many properties that have a property classification that does not match the actual use. An example is a property classed 230 (3 family) that is actually only a single or two family dwelling at this time. Property classification on the tax roles however cannot be changed by information received by the codes office through the rental registration program. M. Stewart noted that there is not a lot of developable land within the city limits.

Discussion regarding the changes of the flood maps and the availability of that information led to the agreement that the website address for FEMA flood maps should be included in the plan.

H. Graves asked what the target completion date of the update is. T. Dreyer said he hoped to have it before the Common Council for approval in the fall. T. Dreyer also apologized that it was taking such a long time but that this is a large project and it is being completed in house rather than hiring it out as was done for the 2003 plan.

The next meeting will be on May 20th to discuss the Natural Resources section of the Comprehensive Plan.

III Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.